

## News from the Smiths in Mozambique- March 2021

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### Please Join Us in Praying For....

- Physical and Spiritual health for our family and team
- Church growth in Cabo Delgado – in numbers and maturity
- Evangelism in 2021
- Refugees from the Insurgent attacks – wisdom about how to bless them
- Safety in our area
- The Bible School to be well attended and strengthen the church
- Literacy Classes – for adults and kids to learn how to read

We closed our eyes, and our kids grew up! Currently in our home there are three teenage boys: one of them an 18-year-old. When and how did that happen? Thankfully, this stage brings us just as much joy as the other stages have. The boys have a great time together albeit the brotherly fighting.

Since we have a team homeschool system, COVID didn't put a stop to our kids' education last year. We were able to continue on as normal. What did change is that since no visitors came over, we weren't able to get our 2020-2021 schoolbooks. That created a challenge. Some dear friends and family scanned and emailed all the pages we needed for months until our current teacher went back for Christmas and brought the actual books back.

One big change this year is that Luke and Andrew started taking college courses online from ASU-Beebe and Harding as dual credit (for high-school and college). There was definitely a learning curve there, but it turned out to be a very smooth transition. Both boys have been accepted to Harding University and will be going together in 2022 when we go back to the U.S. for furlough.

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## **An Update On Our Work With Refugees**



The situation in our Province of Cabo Delgado has gone from bad to worse.

In mid-November we were seeing about 10-15 flatbed trucks or 18-wheelers a day come into town filled with people fleeing the insurgency up north, with as many possessions as they could manage. These were the people that had some money for transport. Many more were walking as far as they could with what they could carry.

One day a flatbed truck, parked in front of our house and unloaded nearly one hundred people to spend the night in our neighbor's yard because the truck driver had spent the night there before. We ran to the bread store and bought 200 bread rolls for each person to have a little something to eat before sleeping and leaving again in the morning on the truck, heading to a bigger city south of us.



Refugees arriving outside our house.

The UN now estimates about 560,000 people are displaced from their homes. Our Provincial capital of Pemba received over 100,000 refugees- many of them by boat- increasing the population of that city by 50% to 300,000. There was little that could have prepared us to grasp the enormity of the situation.

So, what can we do? This is the question that we have been praying over and over- asking God to guide us in this heartbreaking adventure. I feel like Gideon (the weakest of his weak tribe) being asked to defeat an army (as many as the sand on the seashore)- but this time the task is to give everyone hope, food, shelter, and what else?



Boats packed with people arrive in Pemba after 2-3 day journeys.



Not knowing where to go families set up small shelters wherever they find a space.

Last year we sent out a request for financial help for these refugees and we had no idea what to expect.. After only a short amount of time, over \$45,000 came in and so we went to work on a strategy that would be manageable for us.

In November we came up with a three-pronged strategy to reach out to refugees. Below, after each part of the strategy, you will find an update on what has been done to date.

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1. **Distribution of food to the most vulnerable-** While the United Nation's World Food Program (WFP) has been helping many people, they have certain areas that they have not reached. Some of these areas are places where we have churches and so we will look to these small congregations to guide us to those who have not received help. In many areas large families are not getting enough to adequately feed themselves. They are crying out for help.

**Where We're At Today:** We are working with 11 congregations that have helped hand out food to over 1,000 men, women, and children in more than 100 families.

Other items we have purchased and delivered are: Hoes, seed corn, pans, mosquito nets, soap, plastic for roofing, chairs, sleeping mats, school materials and school registration fees.



**2. Training church members in how to care for refugees-** Each congregation has been encouraged to “adopt” households of refugees. The training we want to give them includes:

- a. **Data gathering** through questionnaires to find out the greatest needs.
- b. **Trauma counseling** to learn to attend to their spiritual and psychological needs. This will likely include ways to work with children and youth.
- c. **Entrepreneurship training-** for helping refugees get a vision for how they can once again earn a living.



**Where We're At Today:** We have had three different trainings for churches in our area. Many denominations have participated in each.

1. First, we hosted a meeting to inspire churches to get involved in helping refugees. Those who spoke were Christians from Pemba who were already helping refugees in a really great way.
2. Second, we trained brothers and sisters from the local church in how to gather data through face to face questionnaires and what issues refugees faced in leaving their homes.
3. Third, we brought in a team who spent an entire week training 20 people in how to do trauma counseling, how to ask about their stories, how to listen and guide them through the grief of losing their homes, their way of life, and in many cases, loved ones. These Christians were taught how to compassionately share the hope of Jesus in this most chaotic of situations.





**3. Small business grants-** After refugee families have completed the Entrepreneurship training they may make a business plan and apply for a grant for items that will help them continue their trade (ie. A workbench and some basic tools for a carpenter) or livelihood, (ie. land, a hoe, seed, and machete for those who desire to farm).

**Where We're At Today:** As of this writing we are trying to get through some of the most critical months in terms of hunger. Because of this, we are waiting to do the Entrepreneurship training for refugees after we get out of the hunger season.

Many Muslim and non-Christians are hearing the good news about Jesus and the hope He brings- through our outreach to these refugees. Several congregations are seeing their "adopted" refugee families asking if they can come to church.

One of the two main people groups that make up the refugees are the Mwani people and they are almost 100% Muslim. With all the upheaval and resettlement, and love being shown by Christians, many are starting to come to know Jesus. Praise God!

So, in all this we ask you to keep this work in your prayers and we thank you for your generous support of all these projects.

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## Mozambican Moments



When you can't seem to find a comfortable place to do your homework after church out in the village.

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